

## TRACS Implementation Schedule Adjustment

HUD has released the following announcement on their TRACS web site. It is important that all Section 8 projects that utilize TRACS review closely the HUD announcement. THDA will mail out, by October 16, to each of our projects information and a questionnaire regarding their TRACS mail readiness.

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Posted by TRACS on October 03, 19101 at 11:54:35:

HUD is presently in the final stages of testing a replacement for the SprintMail service now used to submit data to TRACS. The new mechanism is a Virtual Private Network (VPN), serviced by Sprint, and is being called TRACSMail. TRACSMail has been designed to ease our transition to a full-blown Internet solution that we hope to implement by the end of FY 2002, and will be a vast improvement over SprintMail. However, in order to give our industry partners time to adapt their software to the TRACSMail replacement, we have revised our schedule to support both SprintMail and TRACSMail for TRACS Release 201A through January 2002. After that date, all TRACS data must be submitted via TRACSMail, and, as explained more fully below, all data submitted under the new TRACS Release 201B must be submitted via TRACSMail only, and the implementation schedule for 201B has been revised accordingly.

TRACS Release 201B was developed to operate with TRACSMail as the communications vehicle. Originally, the announced intent was to support TRACS Release 201A on SprintMail during the transition to Release 201B on TRACSMail. In order to minimize the number of conversions that the user base is going through at one time, TRACS has made the decision to support Release 201A under both SprintMail and TRACSMail until SprintMail is discontinued, now rescheduled for February 1, 2002, but support Release 201B only under TRACSMail.

TRACS is encouraging the Industry to expedite their conversion to TRACSMail. By converting the existing 201A business applications to communicate using TRACSMail, your payments after January 1, 2002 will not depend upon the continuance of SprintMail. For TRACS and Industry data processors serving multiple sites, supporting two types of communications software does ratchet up the operational complexity. During the transition to TRACSMail, TRACS, CAs, service bureaus, and central sites will inevitably receive 201A data via SprintMail and via TRACSMail. The sites submitting to TRACS, CAs, service bureaus and central sites are likely to have different software developers deploying their software at different times. They will need to send messages in reply using the communications vehicle by which the data was received. Data processors will be able to communicate exclusively with TRACS using TRACSMail while their client base may still be a mix of SprintMail and TRACSMail users. The sooner all users convert to TRACSMail, the better for all parties involved.

The conversion to TRACSMail may be traumatic for those sites without particularly computer literate management. If they are currently using DOS systems, TRACSMail is likely to call for a hardware upgrade as well as a new operating system and the addition of a browser. The successful conversion to TRACSMail could be facilitated if that conversion is done before converting to Release 201B. It will reduce the number of new procedures introduced at one time.

It will also reduce the operational complexity for CAs and data processors serving multiple sites if the conversion to TRACSMail is disconnected from the conversion to 201B. If the conversion to Release 201B under TRACSMail is attempted at the same time that Release 201A is being handled from both SprintMail and TRACSMail, data processing operations will have to cope with 201A SprintMail, 201A TRACSMail and 201B TRACSMail all at the same time during the transition. We encourage users to get the TRACSMail conversion behind them before moving to the 201B application software.

TRACS is recommending that the conversion to Release 201B be deferred until SprintMail is discontinued. This will mean that data processors serving multiple sites will still have to handle Release 201A TRACSMail and 201B TRACSMail during the application software transition, but that will be simplified somewhat by TRACS processing 210A or 201B data based on a pre-published operations schedule. TRACS has already converted its database to accommodate the new 201B data elements. When 201B goes into production it will be an application software implementation only for TRACS - not an application software implementation and a database conversion.

The revised implementation schedule has the following key milestones:

9/24/01 TRACSMail testing by TRACS staff  
10/08 - 10/19/01 TRACSMail - 201A user acceptance testing (Industry)  
10/22/01 Release 201B Industry testing switched to TRACSMail  
10/22 - 10/31/02 TRACSMail - 201A pilot operation  
11/01/01 TRACSMail - 201A available for production  
12/01/01 Initiate TRACSMail - 201B pilot (Note: Early conversion to 201B will be available to those participating in the 201B pilot.)  
02/01/02 Discontinue SprintMail  
TRACSMail - 201B available for production  
TRACSMail - 201A support continues  
4/01/02 Discontinue 201A

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